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**ENGAGEMENT AND ENLARGEMENT  
IN KOREA**

by

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)  <p>The end of the Cold War resulted in a reassessment and modification of US strategy. The focus shifted from Containment to Engagement and Enlargement in regions of the world critical to US interests. The change had significant impact on the Republic of Korea.</p> <p>US strategy toward Korea was changed to include fulfilling the Agreed Framework as a significant security objective. The new strategy employs significant non-military measures to try to bring North Korea into the community of normal states, while still employing forward presence in South Korea to contain the North, pending its modification.</p> <p>The new approach to dealing with North Korea has been difficult for Seoul to accept, and has surfaced fears that US direct contact with Pyongyang may be detrimental to its interests. Despite Seoul's trepidation, it is a major player in the new strategy. Indications point to Pyongyang's near-term compliance with the agreement, but it may take 5-10 years to determine the full success of the strategy. At present, while US-DPRK relations have improved, there has been no perceptible change in North South relations.</p>				
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## Introduction

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of the search for a new US National Security Strategy to replace Containment. In mid-summer 1994, the Clinton Administration formally announced its candidate, the current US National Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement--a global strategy with regional focus. Its three central goals are: to sustain security, to bolster economic revitalization, and to promote democracy abroad. The preferred means to accomplish these goals are: remaining engaged in key regions abroad, and working to enlarge the community of democratic nations.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrent with the search for a replacement to the Containment strategy, Northeast Asia seemed to assume increased significance for the US. Korea, as during most of the Cold War, remained the most likely locale for hostilities in the region, and Pyongyang had already tested the new administration by refusing to allow nuclear inspections and by threatening to make Seoul a 'sea of fire.' The Clinton Administration spent its first two years trying to achieve a diplomatic solution to these tests.

While past strategies for Korea focused principally on our military alliance with South Korea, administration actions during this 'nuclear crisis' suggest an evolution toward a strategy that increasingly employs non-military instruments aimed at the North.

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<sup>1</sup> President William Clinton, 'A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,' (Washington: GPO, Feb. 1995), p. i.

The purpose of this paper is to review the evolution of US post-Cold War strategy, particularly as it pertains to Korea. The broad objectives are:

- To identify the key elements of US strategy toward the Korean peninsula;
- To review the application of major elements of the strategy in Korea;
- To determine the reaction to the strategy and assess any policy implications.

### **Background**

The United States has been engaged in Korea since the end of World War II-- first as an occupying power and later as an ally. Our present relationship was shaped largely by coinciding interests that grew out of the Cold War. The Cold War has ended now, and many of the initial reasons for the bilateral alliance have changed. However, the Korean conflict, viewed by many as a symbol of the East-West ideological struggle, has never ended. Both Koreas remain engaged in a zero sum competition for regime survival that transcends the east-west ideological confrontation of the Cold War. The US remains a party to the conflict as a result of its alliance with South Korea and, consequently, its security policies have a significant affect on the peninsula.

South Korea clearly maintains the political and economic edge in this North/South competition, having developed into a democratic nation with a thriving market economy. North Korea, on the other hand, is both politically and economically destitute, but maintains a far larger military than the South, which represents a constant threat. Seoul has been able to offset this military imbalance by means of its security alliance with the US. The relationship has provided Seoul a cost-effective method of deterring the North, and allowed it to prosper economically. However, reliance on American commitment exacts both political and emotional costs for Seoul each time

Washington reassesses the relationship. Consequently, adjustments to US strategy after the end of the Cold War have been a matter of concern for South Korea.

What follows is an attempt to examine how US strategy on Korea has evolved since the end of the Cold War and, to a degree, to gauge the reaction to it.

### **Evolution Of The Strategy**

Under normal circumstances, national strategy is in constant evolution in accordance with international and domestic dynamics. From the end of World War II, however, US global strategy has been relatively consistent, fixed on containing the expansionist threat of Soviet Communism. Support to the Republic of Korea has generally been viewed as a subset of this strategy. When the Soviet Union collapsed it left a void in our system of threat-based defense planning. Public recognition of the reduced threat and a natural domestic desire to exact a peace dividend required the US to reassess its national interests, the threats to its interests, and the required capabilities to protect its interests.

### **Regional Defense Strategy**

The Bush administration changed the orientation of US strategy from global containment to selective engagement in critical regions of the world, and initiated force reductions that would reduce the military structure to a pre-Korean War level.<sup>2</sup> The developing theory held that the demise of Soviet Communism left America and its

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<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense, 'A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress', Jul. 92, p.2.

allies with an opportunity to preserve an environment within which our democratic ideals could prosper, but that threats to the security of that environment remained in unstable regions of the world. Therefore, preservation of security required an increased focus on regions where unpredictability still threatened US and Allied interests. The administration believed that continued US leadership, engagement in the world, and maintenance of alliances that had been critical to shaping the outcome of the Cold War would still be required to secure our interests.<sup>3</sup>

The key elements of the Regional Defense Strategy included: continued strategic deterrence and defense against limited strikes; forward presence at significantly reduced levels; crisis response forces and mobility to respond quickly to regional crises; and reconstitution capability to create additional forces for a renewed global threat<sup>4</sup>

East Asia-Pacific was highlighted as a critical region of strategic and economic importance for the US, hence, one that required a significant military presence. Korea continued to present the most active security concern in the region, one that was intensified by North Korean efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems.<sup>5</sup> The evolving approach to security in the East Asia Pacific region, and Korea, was further defined in the East Asia Strategic Initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Defense, 'Defense Strategy for the 1990's: The Regional Defense Strategy,' Jan 93, p.1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.22.

## **East Asia Strategic Initiative**

Faced with conflicting demands for regional security and defense reductions, congress approved the Nunn- Warner Amendment to the FY-90 Defense Authorization Act, which directed a strategic reassessment of US forces stationed in Asia. Congress hoped to reduce forces deployed in Asia, and to offset the cuts by increasing the security commitments of our principal allies in the region--Japan and Korea.

The resulting East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI) reasserted the importance of the region and the US intent to remain engaged there. It also noted, however, that the end of the Cold War made our presence seem less relevant. Moreover, rising nationalism in some countries, it said, stirred views that continued US military presence was an affront to their sovereignty. Those factors, and US domestic demand to reduce the defense budget, it concluded, suggested that "adjustments to our forward deployed force structure can and should be made to accommodate changing global, regional and domestic realities."<sup>6</sup> As chartered, the study concluded that our Pacific allies, particularly Japan and Korea, should assume greater responsibility for their own defense, and that our forward presence in those areas should be reduced.

The report stopped short of recommending a full withdrawal, however, as it assessed that "a diminution of US commitment to regional stability, whether perceived or real, would create a security vacuum that other major powers would be tempted or compelled to fill. Such a scenario would likely produce a regional arms race and a climate of confrontation."<sup>7</sup> It also pointed out that the "volatility and uniqueness of the

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Defense, 'A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward The 21st Century,' Nov. 90, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.10.

region--where strategic changes in Europe were not mirrored--combined with existing US economy of force, made major force reductions impossible."<sup>8</sup> It recommended continued presence in a "regional balancing role as an honest broker."<sup>9</sup>

For Korea, the EASI recognized that the peninsula continued to be one of the world's potential military flash points, and recommended only measured reductions. It also recommended that US forces transition from a leading to a supporting role, and that the ROK assume an increased share of the costs of defense.

The report recommended a phased approach for reductions that called for:

- Phase I: (1-3 years) reduction of the existing force in Korea by approximately 7000, and increased ROK responsibility in Combined Forces Command.
- Phase II: (3-5 years) further reduction and reorganization, consistent with the existing threat. (reduce and restructure 2nd ID);
- Phase III: (5-10 years) further reductions according to improvement in circumstances, with the Koreans expected to take the lead role on the peninsula.

More than 25,000 troops were withdrawn from bases in East Asia by December 1992--including forces evacuated from the Philippines. However, as concern over the North Korean nuclear program began to increase, further withdrawals from South Korea were suspended.

The EASI confirmed the following regional peace-time objectives: continue forward presence, but at reduced levels; maintain and broaden access to bases and facilities; maintain regional stability and reduce tension where possible; limit

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), especially in Korea; and encourage security cooperation among countries based on agreed mutual interests.

With respect to Korea, it recommended the following specific objectives: to deter and defend against North Korea; to reduce political and military tensions by encouraging inter-Korean talks and instituting a confidence building measures (CBM) regime; and to transition US forces from a leading to supporting role as part of the broader force reductions.<sup>10</sup>

A follow-up to the EASI, delivered to Congress on 27 July 1992, reconfirmed the findings of the initial report and updated the drawdown schedule. The review noted that the Korean situation had undergone significant changes since the original report, citing Seoul's normalization of relations with the USSR and China, and North-South accords on Non-Aggression and Denuclearization of the peninsula.<sup>11</sup> However, it added that the confrontational situation on the peninsula had not changed, that North Korea's nuclear weapons program continued to be problematic, and that Secretary Cheney had "postponed planned Phase II troop reductions in Korea until the dangers and uncertainties surrounding the North Korean nuclear weapons program were thoroughly addressed."<sup>12</sup>

The reassessment continued in its support to transition US forces from a leading to supporting role, and to shift some of the defense costs to the Republic of Korea. During phase I, ROK general officers were appointed as Senior Member of the Military

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-16.

<sup>11</sup> (ROK and DPRK concluded a Basic Agreement on Reconciliation and Non-Aggression, and a Joint Declaration of Denuclearization of the Peninsula in 1992. Like so many previous agreements, neither have been fully implemented.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 'A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress, July 27 1992, p. 2..

Armistice Commission and Commander of the Ground Component Command of CFC. Additionally, the US and the ROK agreed to a burden sharing formula that would cause Korea to pick up one third of the US costs by 1995.

Phase II withdrawal from Korea, if resumed, was expected to include a further reduction of the 2nd ID force structure down to one mechanized infantry brigade and one combat aviation brigade. 7th Air Force would be reduced to an equivalent strength of one Tactical Fighter Wing. During Phase III, assuming the threat diminished sufficiently, dismantling of the Combined Forces Command was to be considered--"the final step in the transition to a ROK leading role."<sup>13</sup>

The basic objectives of security in Korea were not changed by either of these reports, but the resources proposed to support the strategy were significantly reduced, and the US role in the United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command was significantly altered to facilitate the transition from a leading to supporting role.

### **Bottom Up Review**

In his first policy document on security strategy, President Clinton called for a "fresh assessment of the challenges that require the use of American military...[to] identify new changes, savings and additions that will fit our new strategy."<sup>14</sup> The review, later labeled the Bottom Up Review (BUR) became the new baseline to determine the strategy, force structure, modernization programs, industrial base and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> President William J. Clinton, 'A Vision of Change,' (Washington: GPO, February 17, 1993), P. 69.

infrastructure needed to meet the remaining dangers of the post-Cold War era.<sup>15</sup>

The BUR determined that threats to American interests remained in four broad categories: weapons of mass destruction; regional instabilities; dangers to democracy and reform; and economic dangers to our national security.<sup>16</sup>

All four threats were consistent with the regional strategy developed by the Bush administration, with limited differences in the prioritization and articulation. This was not surprising, as the defense and intelligence community that provided input to the first assessment also supported the BUR. Assuming these threats, the review group concluded that sufficient military forces to handle two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies (MRC's) would be required—a Win-Win strategy. The two MRC decision was not really based on the expectation of fighting 2 simultaneous conflicts, but on the need to maintain sufficient force to deter a second situation from starting.<sup>17</sup>

The report validated the need to maintain continued overseas military presence as a deterrent to aggression. It also identified a need for improved strategic lift capability for rapid build up of follow-on forces and supplies required to support regional contingencies.<sup>18</sup>

Force planning for the MRC's centered on two scenarios—Korea and South West Asia. Although intended to be 'illustrative,' identification of Korea as one of the

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<sup>15</sup> Les Aspin, *The Bottom Up Review*, (Washington: GPO, Sep 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> *The Military Balance: 1994-95*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London: Brassey's LTD, Oct. 94, P.13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

two planning scenarios reflected the reality of the world situation. The ongoing confrontation over the North Korean nuclear weapons program increased the significance of a Korean contingency that now represented potential challenges in at least three of the four categories identified by the BUR.

Consistent with the administration's evolving strategy of engagement and enlargement, the study also identified new opportunities to replace international confrontation with cooperation—all relatively consistent with the intent of the Bush Administration Regional Defense Strategy. These included: expanding security partnerships; enlarging the community of democratic nations; promoting new regional security arrangements to improve deterrence; implementing dramatic nuclear reductions; and protecting US security with fewer resources.<sup>19</sup>

The BUR did not change the basic strategy toward Korea, except to provide a stronger statement about halting the Asian drawdown. It indicated that "we [had] frozen our troop levels in South Korea and were modernizing South Korean and American forces on the peninsula...[and that] our troops [would] stay in South Korea as long as its people want and need us there."<sup>20</sup> This statement added a degree of permanence that had been lacking in the EASI reports, and suggested that US presence in Northeast Asia, would remain close to 100,000, which was very close to the number in place at the time of the report.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, National Security Strategy, p7..

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, Aspin, p.14.

## Engagement and Enlargement

The National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement forwarded to Congress in July 1994 represents the BUR analysis and the administration's view of the post-Cold War world—particularly the primacy of economics and the increased significance of non-military instruments of power. "The strategy aims at global integration of states into mutually beneficial trade and security networks, while isolating or reforming the few disruptive 'rogue' states."<sup>21</sup>

The principal thesis of the enlargement strategy is "the more democracy and political and economic liberalization take hold in the world, particularly in countries of geostrategic importance to us, the safer our nation is likely to be and the more our people are likely to prosper."<sup>22</sup> To insure that this happens, the US, it states, "must remain engaged and exercise leadership that stresses preventive diplomacy...to help resolve problems, reduce tensions and defuse conflicts before they become crises...resolving problems with the least human and material cost."<sup>23</sup>

Engagement in the sense that it is used in this document employs the full range of non-military and military instruments available to achieve that end. The major emphasis, however, seems to be on using non-military means.

The global elements of the strategy focus on: enhancing our security by maintaining a strong defense capability and promoting cooperative security measures; working to assure fair access to foreign markets; and promoting democracy abroad.

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<sup>21</sup> John J. Kohout III, et al, 'Alternative Grand Strategy Options for the United States,' (Comparative Strategy, Vol. 14, 1995), p.369.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Aspin.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid p.28.

Consonant with the findings of the BUR, the strategy calls for "robust and flexible military forces that can: deter and defeat aggression in major regional conflicts; provide credible forward presence; counter weapons of mass destruction; contribute to multilateral peace operations; and support counter-terrorism efforts."<sup>24</sup>

Administration concern over issues in Asia is captured in the statement that "nowhere are the strands of our three pronged strategy more intertwined, nor is the need for continued US engagement more evident."<sup>25</sup> Security is emphasized as the first pillar of the President's New Pacific Community, and emphasis is placed on maintaining an active military presence to deter aggression and maintain regional stability, with participation in both security and economic multilateral fora.<sup>26</sup>

With respect to the Korean situation, the President's strategy document points out that "the continuing tensions on the Korean Peninsula remain the principal threat to the peace and stability of the Asian region."<sup>27</sup> It identifies support for our bilateral security agreement and the need for continued forward presence, as well as stronger efforts to combat proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the peninsula, as key elements of our strategic commitment to Korea and the region.<sup>28</sup>

### **East Asia Strategy Report**

The East Asia Strategy Report (EASR), released in February 1995, provided the detailed regional analysis under the Engagement and Enlargement strategy. It

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, The National Security Strategy, p.28.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

stopped the continued troop reductions called for under the EASI, and reaffirmed US commitment to maintain a stable presence near 100,000 troops, for the foreseeable future.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, it modified the key security objectives for Korea, bringing them more closely in line with those identified in the President's national strategy document. Clearly, controlling proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) on the peninsula, assumed a more visible place in our strategy than it had previously held.

According to the EASR, the new specific security objectives directly related to Korea are: to maintain our strong defense commitment to and ties with the Republic of Korea, in order to deter aggression and preserve peace on the peninsula; and to fully implement the Agreed Framework on North Korea's nuclear program, while standing ready to respond if North Korea does not meet its obligations or threatens US allies;<sup>30</sup>

The inclusion of the Agreed Framework as a security objective is significant, as it not only reflects the increased importance assigned to the WMD problem, but it also seems to signal a change in policy whereby the US assumes a lead negotiating role with North Korea, at least on the nuclear issue. This represents a departure from previous policy that was to support the two Korea's negotiating efforts. Support for North/South talks is not mentioned as a specific objective, however, a statement of lesser force is included in the report that states "the US continues to support South-North tension reduction efforts...and remains committed to the terms of the Armistice Agreement, until replaced by an appropriate agreement between the South and

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<sup>29</sup> William J. Perry, 'United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, (Washington: GPO, Feb. 1995), p.i.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p.4.

North..."<sup>31</sup> It's not clear whether this was merely a semantic slight, or a recognition of the terms of the Agreed Framework, but the growing perception in Korea is that the US has increased its direct negotiating role with the North.

The EASR also continues to support US transition from a leading to a supporting role within the combined command, complementary defense cooperation, and cost sharing. Additional regional objectives that apply to Korea include: encouraging creation of a sub-regional security dialogue in Northeast Asia; and seeking the fullest possible accounting of US MIA.

Looking at the two key objectives, it seems clear that the first--to maintain the defense commitment--defines our policy of engagement toward South Korea largely in terms of peace-time military engagement. The second--to fulfill the terms of the Agreed Framework--defines a policy of engagement and enlargement oriented toward the North in terms of non-military instruments. Together, they represent the administration strategy of maintaining a beneficial security network to contain a rogue state and a simultaneous effort to reform it. The remainder of this paper will focus on these two key security objectives.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 10.



## **Maintaining the Defense Commitment**

Maintaining the commitment to deter and defend against aggression in Korea survived the strategic review, and remains the principle US security objective in Korea, as it was during the Cold War. Forward presence continues to be the principle means to secure that objective and, for now, remains the most positive aspect of the Engagement and Enlargement strategy for South Korea.

## **Forward Presence**

Our bilateral alliance and forward presence have been the mainstay of our defense commitment in Korea since Washington and Seoul concluded a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1953. In many ways, the two elements—treaty and presence—have been mutually reinforcing, particularly since the treaty alone does not commit US forces to a full-time presence. Forward stationed American units have, however, been stationed in Korea and have symbolized the US commitment since the treaty authorized us the right to dispose...land, air and sea forces...in and about the territory of the Republic.<sup>32</sup> Based on this visible commitment, Seoul has sized and equipped its military forces with the understanding that the US would assist in the defense of the Republic. While this relationship has been advantageous for South Korea, it has placed Seoul in a precarious situation should the US forces leave precipitously.

Force levels have declined from 302,000 during the war to approximately 37,000 today. The few remaining forces, however, continue to deter attacks by North Korea

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<sup>32</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the Republic of Korea and the United States, Art 4, Nov. 1954.

and seem to guarantee US participation in South Korea's defense. Although the number of US personnel stationed in South Korea does not fully offset the numerical advantage held by North Korea, their physical presence has frequently been likened to a 'trip wire' that guarantees US commitment in the event of an attack. Moreover, the periodic surge in force levels to support exercises on the peninsula has demonstrated US ability to quickly augment the existing units.

Seoul has consistently supported this relationship, and officially stated its concern over the importance of US presence in its Defense White Paper. A recent edition stated that " In light of the ROK's security situation, it is necessary that US Forces continue to stay in Korea for a considerable period of time...The ROK needs the on-the-spot deterrence, that is, the presence of the US Forces in Korea."<sup>33</sup>

Intermittent reductions in our force presence, however, have chipped away at our credibility over time, and have on occasion been a source of suspicion and friction between Seoul and Washington. Proposed cuts have been interpreted as a signal of US intent to disengage from Korea. In 1971, President Nixon withdrew the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division under the Nixon Doctrine, at the same time US forces were withdrawing from Viet Nam. In 1978, President Carter initiated a withdrawal but stopped short of his goal after an intelligence reassessment pointed to a continuing North Korean buildup. Seoul strongly opposed both plans and its concern over the level of our continued commitment increased with each proposed reduction.

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<sup>33</sup> Defense White Paper: 1989, Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, p132.

The most recent reduction, based on the EASI phase I plan, withdrew 6,987 personnel from Korea between 1991 and 1992.<sup>34</sup> Further reductions were suspended, however, as tensions mounted over North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

The 1992 reassessment of the EASI did little to change the perception that the US was disengaging. Despite the report's rhetoric about sustaining a credible security presence for the long term,<sup>35</sup> the drawdown appeared to be only temporarily on hold. Failed negotiations, North Korean brinkmanship tactics, and high levels of strident North Korean rhetoric, however, once again demonstrated the need for forward based units to deter an unpredictable Pyongyang. As the crisis peaked in 1994, temporary deployments of people and units and early implementation of modernization plans were used to upgrade US forward presence and demonstrate our commitment to ROK security.<sup>36</sup>

The temporary deployment and the publication of the EASR in February 1995 seemed to re-establish a degree of confidence in the security commitment. According to a Senior Researcher at the Korean Institute for Defense Analyses, "as if responding to the region's concern,...the US Department of Defense released the East Asia Strategy Report which assures the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region is a matter of vital American national Interest."<sup>37</sup> Frequent statements of reassurance by President Clinton that "our troops will stay in South Korea as long as its people want

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<sup>34</sup> Defense White Paper: 1992-1993, p.143.

<sup>35</sup> Department of Defense, 'A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim': Report to Congress, Jul. 92, p.4.

<sup>36</sup> Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, 'On Matters Dealing With the Korean Peninsula' (Washington, DC, GPO, 1995), p.4.

<sup>37</sup> Kwan-chi Oh, 'East Asian Security Issues: A Summary Review,' The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis (Winter 95), p.85.

and need us there"<sup>38</sup> have also served to quell concerns. The release of the EASR even drew positive comment from the media as the South Korean Daily Hanguk Ilbo said that "the US attitude has now become clear...the US has expressed its intention to continue playing a security role even though the Cold War is over."<sup>39</sup>

### **Future Challenges**

South Korean support for our continued presence is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, the future of US presence after reunification or a negotiated settlement between the two Koreas is not as clear. There are indications that Seoul may want a continued US presence to prevent the possibility of either China or Japan attempting to fill the void left by a US withdrawal. To date, however, there seems to be no major campaign to prepare the way for such continued presence.

Despite the beneficial regional stability role a continued US presence might play, there are indications that the EASI evaluation of national sovereignty issues conflicting with our continued large-scale presence may be accurate. South Korean media reporting suggests that three such potential issues already exist in Korea. They are: concern over the equity of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), burden sharing issues, and the pressure that continued rapid urbanization places on relocation of military bases.

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<sup>38</sup> Bottom Up Review, p 14.

<sup>39</sup> Seoul, Hanguk Ilbo, 7 Mar 95, p5.

The SOFA, which stipulates the legal status of the US Forces in Korea, has existed since February 9, 1967.<sup>40</sup> It has periodically been a subject of discontent, and has previously been modified [Feb 1991] over what Korea has referred to as unequal or one-sided issues.<sup>41</sup> Previous modifications dealt with land issues, burden sharing, customs inspections and, to a degree, jurisdiction over US servicemen accused of committing crimes. Despite the 1991 effort, Korean dissatisfaction with the SOFA continues, particularly as it relates to the jurisdiction over US servicemen. The present agreement stipulates that US suspects remain in US custody until their trials and all appeals have been completed--a sore topic in Seoul.

An altercation in a Seoul Subway in 1995 set off new demands to correct the so-called unequal or one-sided issues. Five off-duty soldiers were accused of assaulting Koreans in a brawl in the subway. All of the local media carried reports of the incident and most carried editorials that the "SOFA should be revised." The Choson Ilbo noted that "despite a revision to the SOFA in 1991, it still retains many clauses unfair to the ROK, such as restrictions limiting...exercise of judicial jurisdiction by the ROK."<sup>42</sup> Students used the issue to support demonstrations around US installations.<sup>43</sup> Response seemed well out of proportion to the actual significance of the incident, and seemed to relate more to the perception of the unequal nature of the SOFA article on jurisdiction. The issue of who will have custody of US military personnel accused of breaking Korean law is, to many South Koreans, the most contentious article in the SOFA.

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<sup>40</sup> Defense White Paper: 1995-96, p. 109.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Seoul, CHOSON ILBO, 24 May 95, p3.

<sup>43</sup> Seoul, YONHAP, Students Protest Alleged Assaults, 1037 GMT 22 May 95.

Seoul's demands to renegotiate the SOFA were again highlighted in late summer of 1995 when a rape incident involving US servicemen in Okinawa surfaced a similar issue in Japan. Although the Okinawa incident seemed far more egregious, the relative speed with which the US seemed to respond to Japanese demands to discuss provisions of its SOFA touched a sore nerve in South Korea. Seoul formally requested a review of its SOFA in November, 1995, and the US Secretary of Defense agreed.<sup>44</sup>

Provisions of the Korean SOFA have routinely been compared with those of the Japanese SOFA prompting a second complaint—that the provisions of the US-ROK SOFA are more restrictive than the US-Japan version. A recent comparison prompted a comment by a ROK official during negotiations in January that, "If our SOFA is revised to reflect regulations contained in that signed by Tokyo and Washington, we will be able to say we have been successful."<sup>45</sup> Negotiations underway since January 96 have not resolved the issue. The talks were tabled until after the April Korean elections, and have not yet restarted. Failure to reach a mutually agreeable solution to this issue could increase anti-American feeling.

A second issue, related to the SOFA, is burden sharing. It appears far less emotional, yet is a matter frequently discussed in the media. It has been a major topic of the US/ROK annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) since it was first raised as an issue in the 1980's. Since 1989, the ROK has increased its contribution to US

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<sup>44</sup> Army Times, South Korea SOFA Review Set, 4 Nov. 95, p1.

<sup>45</sup> Seoul, KOREA TIMES, SOFA Revision Talks to Resume in Washington Today, Jan 30 1996.

forward presence costs from 45 million to 330 million in 1996, and will increase by 10% per year for the next 3 years.<sup>46</sup>

A representative article from the local media portrays the annual review as "a war of nerves every year with working-level officials from the US Defense Department over the issue of sharing the expenses for maintaining US forces in the ROK...our media has pointed out that the US demand is unjust."<sup>47</sup> A frequent argument against further increases to the annual cost share is based on the \$4.5B cost for Light Water Reactors Seoul will underwrite as part of the (US-DPRK) Agreed Framework. An increasing number of analysts would like to include this type of expense in the burden sharing calculations. Future negotiations over increases will likely argue for such an offset.

Lastly, the continued rapid growth of major cities in South Korea, and the accompanying demand for land to expand housing, parks, and infrastructure will force some difficult decisions concerning US forces. The US maintains bases in three of the largest cities in South Korea. As the cities have grown around these bases, local governments have shown interest in recovering some of the land for public projects. Negotiations to move the bases have been difficult as the US has argued that South Korea must provide new sites with like facilities, and funds to support the move of any US unit.

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<sup>46</sup> Korea and World Affairs, Winter 95, 10 Point Joint Communiqué Issued at the 27th ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting, Seoul, Nov. 3 1995, p731.

<sup>47</sup> HANGUK ILBO, Mar 7, 1995, p.5.

This situation has been characterized as a major pending issue in the ROK Defense White Paper—one that has 'led to the formation of an anti-American movement in some sectors...with some citizens even insisting on unconditional, complete withdrawal of American forces.'<sup>48</sup> Hialeah Compound in Pusan is a case in point. The city wants to move the base in order to make room for an athlete's village to support an international sporting event..<sup>49</sup> The move is presently held up for lack of funding. A Pusan Citizen's Committee has been formed to demand the move and to oppose US demands that Korea foot the bill.

The Pusan camp is not the only base under consideration for a move from a major city. The City of Seoul, since 1988, has expressed a desire to move Yongsan Garrison, home of the US Forces Korea Headquarters. After years of negotiation that action was tabled for lack of funds, but not before the first phase of the plan returned the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Golf Course to the city. The Yongsan move has not been officially canceled and will likely resurface in the outyears, especially after the perceived need for a US presence diminishes. As the reason for US presence gravitates more toward other US interests in the region, and further away from deterrence and defense of Korea, this issue may increase in importance.

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<sup>48</sup> Defense White Paper: 1992-93, Ministry of National Defense, Republic of Korea, pp. 146-147.

<sup>49</sup> Seoul, Korea Herald, USFK Turns Down Proposal to Relocate Camp Hialeah, 6 Feb.



## **The Agreed Framework**

If engagement of South Korea has been best characterized by increased support for US forward presence, engagement of the North has been best characterized by the negotiation of the Agreed Framework.

The US and North Korea signed an Agreed Framework in Geneva on October 21, 1994, in an attempt to resolve a nuclear impasse on the peninsula. Under this agreement, the North was required to immediately halt, and eventually dismantle, its nuclear weapons-related program. In exchange, it was offered a number of security, economic and political incentives. The signing of this Agreed Framework signified the increasing non-military engagement of North Korea by the United States. As the terms of the agreement are successfully completed—a period of 8 to 10 years—engagement of the North is expected to expand and may ultimately mean removal of existing sanctions and extension of diplomatic recognition. This approach varies significantly from the norm applied during the Cold War years, and has been difficult for Seoul to embrace.

The United States was concerned for some time that North Korea was engaged in a research program aimed at developing nuclear weapons. US concerns were eased somewhat when North Korea signed the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985, acceded to the IAEA Safeguards Agreement in 1992, and signed a South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, negotiations over mutual inspections between the two Korean capitals broke down in late 1992, and

Pyongyang failed to fully comply with the its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguards Agreement.

Pyongyang announced its intent to withdraw from the NPT in March 1993, after the IAEA called for special inspections of two undeclared sites. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 825 In April 1993, demanding that North Korea rescind its withdrawal from the NPT, and calling on all UN members to endeavor to resolve the nuclear problem.<sup>50</sup> At this point, the US became more directly involved in trying to get North Korea to live up to its non-proliferation obligations. From then until the signing of the agreement in October, 1994, the US, ROK and DPRK weathered a series of crisis situations.

The accord commits Washington to formally assure the DPRK it will not use nuclear weapons against it; to arrange the construction of two Light Water Reactors (LWRs) in North Korea; to provide the North with heavy fuel oil (HFO) until construction is complete; to reduce barriers to trade; and to progress toward normalization of relations with Pyongyang. In exchange, Pyongyang must freeze its nuclear program, eventually dismantle its existing facilities, and ultimately open its nuclear program to full IAEA safeguard inspections. It must also take steps to implement the inter-Korean Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the peninsula and to engage in inter-Korean dialogue. The deal is to be implemented in phases, defined by interlocking steps, which link the pace of North Korea's actions to reciprocal actions by the US to

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<sup>50</sup> Defense White Paper: 1995-96, p.146.

meet its obligations. These interlocking steps are intended to provide the assurance that each side will complete its end of the bargain.<sup>51</sup>

Since the signing of the agreement in 1994, mutual compliance has remained generally on track, although slightly behind schedule. Continued negotiations throughout most of 1995 resulted in the establishment of a consortium—The Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO)—which is responsible for the construction of the LWRs, completion of a supply agreement with Pyongyang, and designation of a South Korean contractor, Korea Electric Power Company (KEPCO), as the prime contractor for the LWR construction.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, US contractors have been working in the North, preparing spent fuel removed from the deactivated reactors for storage. KEDO personnel (US-ROK-JA) have made several trips into the North to conduct site surveys, and International Atomic Energy Agency personnel continue to verify the freeze. The freeze appears to be holding, despite a continuing high level of anti US/ROK propaganda and some periodic saber rattling by Pyongyang.

### **US Administration View**

US reaction to the agreement has been mixed, with some in academia, the media, and congress criticizing the cost to the US—which is minimal—and the seeming laxity of demands on Pyongyang. The administration, however sees it as an effective counter-proliferation measure and a broader effort to open North Korea and lure it into a state of normalcy by relieving its political and economic isolation—which is, of course,

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<sup>51</sup> Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 'North Korea Nuclear Agreement,' Jan. 95, p.43.

<sup>52</sup> Korea Herald, March 20, 1996.

consistent with the administration's strategy of engagement and enlargement.

Assistant Secretary of State, Winston Lord characterized the agreement as going further than just the nuclear issue, saying, "we are using it to promote a broader approach toward our long term goals: a durable peace on the Korean peninsula and the eventual reunification that the Korean people seek."<sup>53</sup>

Within this context, the administration views the agreement as having defused a nuclear crisis that, left unchecked, might have resulted in a DPRK program capable of producing enough plutonium for at least several nuclear weapons annually. Such a capability could have presented a threat beyond the Korean peninsula if Pyongyang had sought to include the weapons grade material in its inventory of weapons for sale—its only viable source of financial capital.

According to Assistant Secretary of State Lord, "the administration's policy of gradual engagement with North Korea is a major success."<sup>54</sup> Testifying before congress, he indicated that the US is pursuing a three track approach to the North: implementing the agreement, promoting tension reduction through North-South dialogue, and increasing contacts with North Korea in order to promote security and stability in the region. He went on to point out that these policies are being pursued against the background of a strong deterrent posture and close coordination with our allies—South Korea and Japan. With respect to our expanding contacts, he said that "in close concert with our South Korean allies, we seek to engage the DPRK bilaterally

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.16.

<sup>54</sup> USIA Wireless File, Congress, House Committee on International Relations: Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Testimony of the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Ambassador Winston Lord, March 20, 1996, p.16.

on a number of issues in order to...build a North Korean stake in responsible behavior."<sup>55</sup> By doing this, the administration hopes to encourage North Korea to continue on the road to greater openness, and to demonstrate the benefits of acting according to accepted norms. The administration intends to move gradually toward normal economic and political relations, based on Pyongyang's progress along this line.

### **ROK View**

Views across the Republic also vary, but are generally less enthusiastic about the agreement's prospects for improving North-South relations. President Kim Yong-sam affirmed his strong support for the Agreed Framework in a July 1995 joint press conference with President Clinton, establishing the official ROK position.<sup>56</sup> However, he has reportedly faced a domestic backlash from conservative critics.<sup>57</sup> Despite recent progress that has addressed some ROK concerns, many Koreans remain ambivalent about the agreement, understanding that it may be the best of the available options, but that it is flawed in areas that may take years to fully understand.

Politically, critics charge that the agreement is too one-sided in favor of Pyongyang at Seoul's expense. They believe that North Korea deliberately staged its threat to withdraw from the NPT in order to refocus negotiations away from the South, and to directly engage the US—a long-time objective. Having attracted Washington's

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> US Department of State Dispatch, August 7, 199, Vol. 6, No. 32, p.607.

<sup>57</sup> Far East Economic Review, Pyongyang Two Step, June 29, 1995, p. 22.

attention, they believe that Pyongyang continues to play its nuclear 'card' to elicit a steady stream of concessions, which Seoul may have to fund.<sup>58</sup>

Pyongyang's gambit is viewed in the South as an effort to drive a wedge between Washington and Seoul to break up the alliance.<sup>59</sup> Restricted from the high-level talks, Seoul has had to rely on Washington to look out for its interests, and to maintain a firewall between discussion of the nuclear accord and other issues which are viewed to be purely inter-Korean. Seoul is particularly concerned that Pyongyang is using this opportunity to systematically dismantle the Armistice Agreement and to force Washington into bilateral negotiations for a peace treaty that excludes South Korea. North Korea's recent efforts to unilaterally terminate the armistice, years of mistrust, and a seemingly endless stream of US-DPRK bilateral meetings over a variety of topics have led to suspicions that Seoul is left out of the loop in some substantive negotiations. Consequently, Korean media and, to a degree, academia frequently fault the government for blindly following Washington. Some express concern that Washington may be tempted to forget Seoul's interests in order to satisfy US interests.<sup>60</sup>

Increased communication between Washington and Pyongyang is viewed in terms of a reciprocal loss in communication between Pyongyang and Seoul. Each new level of bilateral talks raises South Korean concerns that the relationship will preclude

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<sup>58</sup> MUNWHA ILBO, April 22, 1996, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> Man-kwon Nam, Security and Arms Control: A Peninsula Approach, A paper presented for the 1995 Korea-Canada North Pacific Arms Control Workshop: Confidence Building at a Regional Level, (Seoul: Korea Institute for Defense Analysis, 1995), p.16.

<sup>60</sup> Taewoo Kim, North Korea-US rapprochement: the South Korean dilemma, (Third World Quarterly, Vol. 16 No. 4, 1995), pp.664-665.

favorable ROK negotiations with the North. These concerns have even prompted discussion of a 'standard for consenting to North Korea-US contacts,' to insure that the South Korean interest is not damaged.<sup>61</sup>

Some have also expressed concern over Washington's naiveté in dealing with North Korea. Failure to understand Pyongyang's penchant for unilaterally interpreting agreements and its negotiating strategy of renunciation of prior accords, crisis generation and brinkmanship are credited with eliciting Washington's all too eager responses in its effort to 'engage and enlarge.' The negotiating team's unwillingness to develop strong linkages between obligations and inducements is credited with encouraging Pyongyang to keep coming back for more, without having to pay the bill.<sup>62</sup>

Economically, there is concern over acknowledgment for the role that the South is playing in terms of funding the strategy. Seoul will ultimately pick up the tab for \$4.5B in construction costs for the LWRs. The reactors are being financed, interest free, for a period that may ultimately span 30 years--10 years construction and 20 years repayment period for Pyongyang. Given Pyongyang's current economic situation and record for non-payment of foreign debt, the loan may ultimately have to be written off, assuming that the debt is not overcome by unification. In addition to picking up the construction tab, Seoul is concerned that the costs continue to mount as Pyongyang asks for more. Additionally, Washington, who is the ultimate guarantor of the project, has not fully funded HFO deliveries and is in the precarious position of identifying

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<sup>61</sup> CHUNGANG ILBO, April 26, 1996, p.1.

<sup>62</sup> Manwoo Lee, *Pyongyang and Washington: Dynamics of Changing Relations*, (Asian Perspective, Vol. 19, No. 2, Fall-Winter 1995), pp. 138-139.

funding sources as the bill comes due. Seoul has maintained that it is unwilling to pay this bill.

Militarily, a wide variety of concerns have been expressed, including lack of transparency, possible diversion of aid to the military, conflict of interest for the US to provide a positive security assurance to one state and a negative security assurance to its rival, and lack of a South Korean strategic alternative.

Opponents have charged that the agreement fails to provide any near-term transparency of North Korean nuclear capabilities as IAEA special inspections are deferred for 5 years.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, some analysts fear that delaying the inspections of Pyongyang's undeclared nuclear facilities will allow the North time to continue its program and hide the results before any substantive inspection takes place. By that time, they argue, Pyongyang could conceal enough nuclear material to do serious damage in the South. Proponents of this theory argue that North Korea has not changed in its antagonism toward the South, and has not renounced its unification by force option. Therefore, they argue it is reasonable to assume that, based on its past irrational acts, Pyongyang will attempt to circumvent this agreement. Moreover, it is still not clear if the IAEA will be able to fully reconstruct Pyongyang's past efforts to extract plutonium.

Military analysts also point out that the agreement has done nothing to address the conventional imbalance, the North Korean missile program, or Pyongyang's suspected chemical and biological programs. All of these pose a threat to the stability

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Kim, p. 663.



of the peninsula and the region that is equal to or greater than the suspect nuclear program right now. Deliveries of HFO and rice aid are also suspected to have been diverted to the military, or at least to have helped the military hold on to its strategic stores while the country survives a food and energy shortage.

Lastly, strategic planners see a potential conflict in the US attempting to provide a security guarantee to both the North and the South.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Seoul's acquiescence to the accord is viewed as preventing the development of a strategic deterrent, which demands continuing reliance on Washington for its security.

### **Conclusions**

The evolution of post-Cold War strategy toward Korea has been marked by both continuity and change. Maintaining close bilateral ties under the Mutual Defense Treaty and supporting deterrence and defense through forward presence are consistent with policies employed under Containment and the Regional Defense Strategy. Deterrence and defense remain the prime security objectives in Korea. The increased focus on nonproliferation of WMD on the peninsula, and use of non-military instruments to induce normative behavior in North Korea represent change under the Engagement and Enlargement strategy.

The Clinton administration spent its first two years in office engaging Pyongyang over its suspect nuclear weapons program. While the administration focused on seeking a diplomatic solution to North Korea's nuclear challenge, it also recognized

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Kim, p.664.

the importance of military presence for deterrence and defense. The prolonged crisis atmosphere that surrounded the negotiations resulted in a stabilized presence in Asia for the foreseeable future, and caused the administration to reassert its defense commitment to Korea and Asia.

North Korea's quantitative military advantage over the South and its history of aggression and unpredictability demand continued forward presence for the foreseeable future. The rapid escalation to near-hostilities during nuclear negotiations in 1993-94 clearly illustrates that security policy cannot be built on confidence building measures and incentives alone. Without US forward presence, the Korean situation could easily have escalated to war.

The South Korean leadership has built its defense strategy around the US defense commitment. Strategies that involve reduction in US force presence have historically elicited their concern, and continue to do so. Any plan to rapidly withdraw forces, or even to temporarily redeploy significant numbers of personnel continue to place Seoul at risk, both politically and militarily. Recent assurances that the US intends to remain engaged with a military forward presence have provided a degree of reassurance, but Korea and much of Asia appears to remain skeptical. Seoul is clearly in the process of reassessing its security interests and needs.

While US presence will remain important for some time to come, increasing concern over issues such as renegotiation of the SOFA, burden sharing, and relocation of US units could change Korean perception of the value of that presence. None of these issues is significant enough to seriously raise the question today, and if handled properly, could possibly be averted in the future. If Washington and Seoul are serious

about maintaining US presence after the North Korean threat diminishes, both capitals need to work now to develop public support.

The technical aspects of the Agreed Framework appear to be working. However, it will take several years to determine if North Korea truly intends to meet its obligations under the accord. In the meantime, every effort must be made to hold Pyongyang accountable for its actions. Critics of the agreement have several valid concerns that must be watched closely.

The most worrisome aspect right now is Pyongyang's failure to reestablish meaningful contacts with Seoul. Pyongyang must not be allowed to isolate Seoul by its incessant demands for one-on-one dialogue with the US. The record is fairly clear that Pyongyang has refused to carry on meaningful dialogue with Seoul since it began negotiating with the US. South Korea is clearly concerned that, with all the US-North Korean bilateral talks, the US might engage in dialogue that is not in the ROK interest. Every effort must be made to assure Seoul that such is not the case. The basic solution to the standoff on the peninsula remains a Korean problem to solve, and we should support that.

Military transparency under the Framework is a problem. Pyongyang needs to submit to special IAEA inspections and come clean over its past nuclear program. Until it does, the possibility that it has a nuclear device cannot be discounted. As long as that situation is allowed to exist, Seoul will remain threatened. Additionally, more attention must be given to resolving the conventional military imbalance and Pyongyang's chemical and biological weapons programs. Threats in those areas pose equally significant problems for South Korea.

Throughout all of our dealings with North Korea we must remain aware that there is always a high risk of recidivism. Pyongyang has a long history of unilaterally interpreting agreements and renouncing them whenever it meets its needs. In the end, the political and economic incentives offered under current initiatives could prove to be insufficient to permanently change this isolated state. North Korea has convinced its people, for more than 40 years, that the United States and South Korea are untrustworthy. It seems unlikely that close cooperation is just around the corner. A great deal of patience will be required if the Agreed Framework and the administration's attempt at enlargement with North Korea are to succeed.

Close cooperation and coordination between Seoul and Washington will be required to maintain solidarity in this effort. Washington will need to understand Seoul's sensitivities in handling Pyongyang, and Seoul will need to understand that consulting an ally does not mean getting permission. There will be occasions when the two nations disagree and they will have to resolve the matter privately, keeping the media out of the fray. In some cases, they may just have to agree to disagree, as long as neither country's vital interest is put at risk. If Washington and Seoul accept that premise, it seems unlikely that Pyongyang will succeed in driving a wedge between them.

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